

Emergency work to Skagit County levees



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEATTLE - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, is performing emergency work to repair levees in Skagit County that protect more than \$2.5 billion in property, as a result of the disastrous October 2003 floods.

The Corps is scheduled to complete critical construction to levees that protect the Anacortes Water Treatment Plant, Burlington Waste Water Treatment Plant, schools, large shopping malls, a hospital, other commercial properties, public land, more than 10,000 homes and 45,000 acres of agricultural land by Sept. 30.

"We are working as fast as we can, but we can only work as fast as the rock quarries can produce rock," said Matt Caesar, Corps Emergency Management.

Five projects sponsored by the Diking Districts 1, 3, 12, 17, 22 have all been awarded, equipped and are at various levels of progress. A project in the City of Mount Vernon is close to being awarded. Repairs to Diking District 1 are near completion.

Last year, two consecutive flooding events in October and a subsequent flood in November damaged the levees and displaced homes, businesses and ruined harvests for farmers. The rehabilitation projects will repair 48 damaged points and bring the structural integrity of the levees back to pre-flood conditions.

Even though the projects fall under special emergency management authorities the Corps took into account many considerations including water quality, environment, and cultural resources.

Construction materials were procured only from established sources to avoid contaminants and meet all standards. Work was also timed to minimize disruption of salmonid migration. In addition, an archeological inspection is being conducted during construction.

The federal/local construction cost share is 80/20 percent for non-federally owned levee projects that fall under the criteria of emergency rehabilitation projects. The total cost of six Skagit projects is more than \$7 million.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a major Army command with a broad set of missions and capabilities. One of its missions is to provide assistance, within its authorities when natural disasters or other emergencies occur.

Emergency preparedness and response is primarily a state and local responsibility. However, instances when the nature of the disaster exceeds the capabilities of state and local interests, the Corps of Engineers may provide help to save human life, prevent immediate human suffering or mitigate property damage.

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